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MELODY—THE SOUL OF MUSIC:

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AN

ESSAY

TOWARDS THE

IMPROVEMENT

OF THE

MUSICAL ART:

WITH AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING ACCOUNT OF AN INVENTION.

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*Harmonie* grandeurs choral-joys impart,  
But *melody* can move the feeling heart;  
In concord Guidos *flow'ry* wreaths entwine,  
The *sweets* of plaintive song be ever mine.

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GLASGOW,

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1798.

THE JOURNAL OF THE

ESSAY

THE JOURNAL OF THE

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WITH AN APPENDIX

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## PREFACE.

*The writer of the following essay had, from early youth, felt the delightful effects of simple and pathetic melody. He frequently noticed, what many others no doubt have experienced, that different strains made various impressions on his mind—that some highly exhilarated the spirits, while some gently soothed the mind, inclining it to tenderness and pleasing melancholy; and others inspired it with a kind of mental courage and elevation, easier to be felt than expressed. He eagerly sought the enjoyment of those pleasant sensations: and, in the Scottish airs, he frequently found that simple and pathetic expression which suited his taste. After having long admired and enjoyed these, he bestowed some attention on that refined harmonic music which is in*



such general use at present. In this "mingled world of sounds," however, he found his expectations disappointed, and his feelings not a little tantalized. The intricate modulations of the melody, and the perplexing combinations of the harmony, seemed, with regard to expression, to be a mere chaos; ill suited to gratify the mind which had felt the strong influence of the music that moves the passions. He turned his attention to consider the principles of this complicated system of music; and having formed some opinions, which excited him to compare them with those of others, he perused some of the best authors who treat of the history and principles of the art. In this investigation, he was highly pleased to find that a kind of music, similar to that which had made such pleasant impressions on his mind, had been in great esteem and use, in the most ingenious and polished nation of antiquity. Emboldened in this manner, he proceeded to extract from these authors, such passages as might illustrate his ideas; and formed them into the essay which he now ventures to submit to the judgment of the public. Some of the sentiments contained in it may appear bold and presuming; especially to such as, from habit or interest, are prejudiced in favour of the present system of music. But, as these sentiments are inspired by love of the art, and zeal to apply it to the noblest purposes, he hopes they will be judged with candour.

*The leading thoughts and opinions have originated in his own feelings and judgment. But, for many illustrations and hints, he is indebted to Dr. Burney and other esteemed writers on music; as will be seen from the quotations.*





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city is to be found, Music and her  
twin-sister Poetry, kindle the enthusiasm  
of the savage tribes, and enliven their  
social joys. Civilized nations have  
cherished and cultivated music to a high  
degree of refinement.

### INTRODUCTORY EULOGY.

**M**MUSIC, or the art of pleasing the ear, and touching the heart, by means of sweet sounds, is one of the most ancient and noble of the fine arts. It seems to be the most universal, durable and useful, of the elegant pleasures of mankind. It is the darling of the most uncivilized people, in the rudest age. Where scarcely a trace of architecture, sculpture, painting, and the other arts which ornament polished so-

ciety is to be found, Music and her twin-sister Poetry, kindle the enthusiasm of the savage tribes, and enliven their social joys. Civilized nations have cherished and cultivated music to a high degree of refinement.

Sanctioned by divine authority, it appeared in the greatest splendour in Judea, as the assistant of devotion, and prophetic inspiration. Here was displayed an illustrious instance of its power over the mind; the evil spirit of King Saul yielding to the melodious influence of David and his harp. In Greece, combined with poetry, music formed a material part of education, softened the rude manners of barbarous people, and was a safeguard to the precepts of their sage legislators. Such

was the veneration which attended it, in this favourite country of the Muses, that miraculous powers were ascribed to it, by the poets. Distempers of the most fatal kind, the cruel beasts of prey, and even inanimated nature, were feigned as yielding to its fascinating impulse.\* From the poems of Ossian we learn, that, in former times, among the Gael, poetry and music were as much esteemed as in ancient Greece. By means of these, they strongly imprinted on their

\* Though these are fabulous, it cannot be justly inferred, that music had not great powers in Greece. No one disbelieves that the Greeks were a spirited and brave race, that they acted heroically at Marathon and Thermopylæ, because supernatural actions are attributed by the poets to Hercules and Achilles. The poets must have a foundation, on which to raise such fictions. And, with respect to music, that they had a good one, we have ample historical evidence.



memory the "tales of other times;" the noble deeds of their forefathers; and softened the horrors of war with the tender sentiments of humanity.\*

The universal love and practice of music, may cease to create wonder, when we think of the good effects it is capable of producing on the mind.

Judiciously used, it can cheer the spirits, expand the soul with magnanimity, benevolence and compassion,

\* It seems scarcely possible, one would think, for those who have access to the remaining channels of oral tradition, or to those who have perused Dr. Blair's Critical Dissertation with the annexed evidences, to doubt that these Poems are in substance the production of former times, and contain a just representation of ancient Gaelic manners; which is sufficient for the present purpose.

soothe its anguish, and elevate it to the sublimity of devotion.

In the following essay, an attempt will be made to explain the manner in which such desirable effects are produced.

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duced.

ART I.

OF THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE  
INFLUENCE OF THE SENSATIONS OF PAIN AND PLEASURE

There are certain sensations which  
are distinguished by the name of  
pain and pleasure, and which are  
the most powerful of all the sensations  
to which the human mind is subject.

These sensations are of two kinds,  
namely, pain and pleasure, and are  
the most powerful of all the sensations  
to which the human mind is subject.



## PART I.

### *Theory of Melody—its use and corruption.*

There are certain inarticulate tones and inflections,\* swells, and softening, of the voice adapted, by nature,

\* By tones are meant different degrees of pitch, by inflections the varying of pitch, upwards or downwards.

to express the various passions and affections of the mind; such as joy, grief, kindness, anger, supplication and pity. Independent of articulate language, these are instinctively and universally understood. And they are not only understood, but by a sympathetic power, they communicate the feelings of one person, in some degree, to another; forming thus one of the links which unite mankind. This inarticulate language is much used among savage nations, whose articulate speech is very imperfect, and whose manners admit of a free and impassioned communication of sentiment. The use of it, in ordinary intercourse, is much limited, among civilized nations, by the refinement of manners, which regulates and disguises the natural feelings, and by the copiousness of

the verbal tongues. Still, however, this voice of nature retains its sympathetic influence, especially when accompanied by any thing which pleases the ear or the imagination. This, the melody of music is capable of doing in a high degree. And, imitating the pathetic tones and inflections, and interweaving them in its strains, it penetrates to the heart and excites the corresponding affections.

Those musical notes, whose proportion to the key is similar to that which the tones of passion have to the ordinary pitch of voice, are used, in such strains of melody; and the inflections are imitated as nearly as the intervals of music will admit. In this way, it is very probable, are produced those simple and pathetic melodies which move



the passions, and will continue to please and be interesting while human nature continues the same. As we are not to suppose that the musical ear was confounded at Babel, though languages were, such melodies as express most successfully those tones and inflections, will be the most universally attractive, in all nations, in every age.

These properties and imitative powers of melody have not been altogether unnoticed by writers who treat of music. Thus Longinus says, "Symphonies are imitations of inarticulate sounds, and excite various sentiments in our minds, though they do not convey words to our ears, so as to raise precise ideas." Holden, in his elementary work, says, "There is something

“peculiar in every note which well  
 “deserves our regard. The key note  
 “is remarkably bold and commanding.  
 “The third and seventh have some-  
 “thing supplicative in them, and it is  
 “on one of these tones that the beggar  
 “chiefly dwells if he use any note at  
 “all. The sixth is a kind of plaintive  
 “sound. The fourth is grave and so-  
 “lemn. The fifth partakes of the na-  
 “ture of the key, and the second is not  
 “unlike to the sixth.\* Is the gay the  
 “brilliant wanting, asks the lively  
 “Rousseau. Take *Ami la Da la re* the  
 “major tones by diesis—Do we require

\* Holden does not distinguish the flat and sharp series, the effects of which are different; the flat being softer and sweeter than the sharp. Rousseau, quoting Rameau, says, the major 3d. naturally excites a joy in us—the minor 3d. inspires us with tenderness and sweetness.

“the affecting, the tender, take the  
 “minor tones by b flat—C sol ut minor  
 “reaches the mournful and expresses  
 “sorrow.”

The truth of the foregoing theory can be best determined by comparing the impassioned tones and inflections of the voice with corresponding melody, as exactly as it can be done, by the musical ear. This however is no easy matter. The author has tried to make such a mental comparison, but can mention little more than that the result seemed to favour the theory. He can particularise, however, one instance of the effect of resemblance between melody and the tones and accents of passion upon his mind. A common Scottish reel, called “the Cameronians



"rant," when played not very quick, always strongly reminded him of the angry tones of two women scolding. In the first part of the tune tart altercation seemed to commence. In the second part scolding hostilities appeared to rage, and about the close to come to such a height, that cuffs, tearing of hair and other inharmonious accompaniments might be instantly expected to take place. Now, upon no other principle than the imitation of the tones of voice by the melody can the author account for such a strong impression on his mind; as he is certain that no association of circumstances produced it. If, then, melody can imitate the accents of the passion of anger, it may those of others. And, if the tones of the passions have a sympathetic effect on the

mind, it appears very natural to impute the power of music upon the affections to that imitation.

Whether this hypothesis be found to be just or not, it seems to be generally acknowledged that music has some qualities, which influence the passions. Thus Dr. Burney says, "Music is a language that can accommodate its accents and tones to every human sensation and passion." To the same purpose Dr. Beattie says, "Certain melodies and harmonies have an aptitude to raise certain passions, affections and sentiments in the human soul." And again, "It must be acknowledged that there is some relation at least, or analogy, if not similitude, between certain musical sounds

“and mental affections. Soft music  
 “may be considered as analagous to  
 “gentle emotions, and loud music, if  
 “the notes are sweet and not too rapid,  
 “to sublime ones, and a quick succes-  
 “sion of noisy notes, like those we hear  
 “from a drum, seems to have some  
 “relation to hurry and impetuosity of  
 “passion.”

Instruments, while they make the same use of the inarticulate tones and inflections, impart the additional pleasure arising from their imitating the voice in singing; a pleasure similar to what we receive from those representations of Painting and the Drama which render objects and scenes viewed with indifference in real life, interesting and amusing. Accordingly it is often said



that the nearer the performance of instruments resembles the voice in singing the more perfect it is. Thus Dr. Burney, "To say that a performer makes his instrument to sing is at present the highest encomium that can be bestowed upon him." When, in another part of his History, the Dr. says, "The simplicity and paucity of notes which constitute grace, elegance and expression in vocal music render instrumental meagre and insipid," he certainly does not attend to the imitation of the voice by the instrument; which, instead of rendering the melody insipid, really makes it, if good, more striking and pleasing. Dr. Beattie writes, "Of all sounds that which makes its way most directly to the human heart is the human voice, and

“ those instruments that approach nearest to it are in expression the most pathetic and in tone the most perfect.”

This moving kind of melody, in its effects on the mind, much resembles eloquence. Sentiments and subjects, which have often been considered with languor or indifference, touched with the enchanted wand of Oratory, make their way to the heart, and persuasively captivate the affections.\* A similar effect is produced by expressive melody. And it has the peculiar advantage that simple and regular strains may be easily transferred from one poem or

\* Perhaps owing partly to the Orator making some use of the same tones and inflections, inspiring the audience with a belief that his eloquence flows from the heart.

song to another; by which means the musical composer's works may enliven the sentiments of future ages.

Melody, by itself, can thus inspire the mind with a cheerful or mournful, bold or solemn mood; according to its genius. Animated with suitable language, the soul glories in the heroic and virtuous actions of former times, it is inspired with courage to resist the shock of enemies and adverse fortune with intrepidity, it sympathises with the distressed; and is filled with devotion and gratitude to its gracious creator and preserver.

While melody thus affects the heart and moves the passions, it is capable of giving the most intense degree of mu-



sical pleasure. For the truth of this, an appeal may be made to the experience of all who have a musical ear, a lively imagination and a feeling heart. Who has not found himself highly delighted, while softened with the notes of melancholy, or enlivened with those of joy, in the most simple yet pathetic strains—perhaps those of a poor blind minstrel! This effect is felt not only by such as are unskilled in musical science, but sometimes by the most ingenious of the learned. Thus Mr. Eastcott tells us, that Dr. Haydn declared to a friend of his, that the *strongest musical impression* he had ever received was made on him by the charity children, singing together, at their assembly at St. Paul's, a Psalm to a *plain melody*, which he said affected him

so powerfully, that he was confident he should remember it to his latest hour.

The great effects which we find ascribed to music in history seem to apply chiefly or wholly to melody combined with poetry. It is now perhaps impossible exactly to ascertain the nature of this music, the fame of which the ancients have transmitted to succeeding times. But, after the deepest researches of the learned, and examination of such fragments as have been preserved, it appears, in general, to have been a simple kind of melody, conveying and sweetening the glowing sentiments of the heart, expressed in the poetic language of early ages. "Amongst the ancients," says Mr. Avison, "the true simplicity of melo-

“dy, with perhaps some mixture of  
 “plain unperplexed harmony, seems to  
 “have been that magic spell which so  
 “powerfully enchanted every hearer.”

With a view to depreciate the merit  
 of Greek music, it has been remarked  
 that, as the term was of a much more  
 extensive signification than with us,  
 poetry, being included, must have had a  
 great share of the influence attributed to  
 music. Yet it appears, from the very  
 great attention they bestowed on melo-  
 dy, as we learn from their musical au-  
 thors, that it was considered to be very  
 essential; as the means, no doubt, of  
 exciting attention and prepossessing the  
 heart in favour of the poetry.

Thus, the harp accompanied the Bard



while he instructed and delighted the ancients. Hence we see that this celebrated music resembled more our simple ballad strains than the elaborate performances of our orchestras. Some of those simple melodies, indeed, are better suited to touch the feelings, than many compositions of great masters of Harmony. Yet some affect to despise them as vulgar. May they not, in the same spirit, despise the common affections of piety, benevolence, pity, joy and grief? Are many sublime and pathetic passages in Homer, Shakespear or Milton less excellent, or less to be esteemed, because familiar to school-boys, or people of all ranks in the present age? Dr. Burney, noticing a popular air (in Otho) acknowledges that to have af-

forded universal pleasure *when new*,\* is a mark of original excellence, and that few airs of such a happy kind are ever produced by the greatest composer during a long life. The simplest strains, indeed, if pathetic, may be very difficult to compose; because it is not scientific knowledge they require so much as natural genius, joined to a feeling mind. This kind of genius, either in pathetic oratory, poetry or melody, seems to consist in a certain ardency of imagination, by which the composer excites, in some degree, his own affections, and, with their assistance, easily finds the means of sympathetically moving

\* The Doctor needed not to have restricted it to the time "when new." It detracts not from the merit of "Paradise Lost" that it was neglected for some time after its publication.

those of others. And, particularly as to melody, according to the foregoing theory, he succeeds in imitating such tones as are suited to the impression he intends to make. So enticing, however, is that popish veneration which is often paid to science, that composers frequently seem to think there can be little merit in simplicity; and forget that the noblest influence of their art lies there.

Every kind of melody, from the warblings of the grove, to the dignified strains which animate sublime poetry, imparts some degree of pleasure to the ear; but, with regard to intellectual gratification, and real use, there is a material difference. Some, merely, are agreeable to the ear; without making



any impression on the mind. Other kinds move the passions; but, of these, there are some which have a better effect, as to our virtue and happiness, than others. With regard to their use in life, they have been elegantly compared to the gales which agitate the surface of the ocean. But as every breeze wafts not the ship to the desired haven, neither does every cherished passion promote our welfare. Anger, for instance, never needs fuel to its flame, but rather something to abate its fury. In general, the cheerful yet placid emotions should be preferred to the giddy and turbulent. Now, it fortunately appears, that the strength of the music of the passions lies in the expression of such as are of a virtuous tendency; and it is even thought that,

owing to the generally pleasing nature of melody, it is incapable of enforcing those of the opposite kind. Accordingly Dr. Beattie says, "Because that  
 "all the passions that music can inspire  
 "are of the agreeable kind, it follows  
 "that all pathetic or expressive music  
 "must be agreeable. Music may in-  
 "spire devotion, fortitude, compassion,  
 "benevolence, tranquillity; it may in-  
 "fuse a gentle sorrow that softens  
 "without wounding the heart, or a  
 "sublime horror that expands and ele-  
 "vates while it astonishes the imagina-  
 "tion; but music has no expression for  
 "impiety, cowardice, cruelty, hatred or  
 "discontent." In the feeling mind there is naturally a bias which favours the good impressions of music. It has been observed that we are more

forcibly excited to sympathize with the unfortunate than to be glad with the prosperous—to “weep with those who weep,” rather than to “rejoice with those who rejoice.” In consequence of this bias, tender and plaintive melody makes a strong impression;\* by which the feelings and habits of benevolence and compassion are cherished, and levity and anger repressed. Solemn and bold expression, too, has a noble effect on the manly soul, and leads to devotion and greatness of mind. These virtuous impressions are apt to have most effect in the quiet hours of retirement. Here, melody being capable of recreating the mind, has a peculiar advantage over

\* Hence the favour which some Scottish and other simple airs have with musicians of genius and feeling.



harmony, the opportunities of enjoying which are comparatively few.

Thus, the perfection of vocal melody consists in its being the best adapted to convey and enforce sentiments expressive of the virtuous emotions of the mind. And, as the affecting of the heart is to be preferred to the mere gratification of the ear, the perfection of instrumental melody is the good imitation of the best vocal; especially as this imitation, in itself, is highly pleasant to the sense.

Hence we see that good music is favourable to virtue. Its true use, as expressed by the author of the first account of Handel's life, is to heighten the natural impressions of religion and humanity. This is chiefly effected by

means of that kind of melody which excites the affections. "Pathos or expression," says Dr. Beattie, "is the chief excellence of music. Without this it may amuse the ear, it may give a little exercise to the mind of the hearer, it may for a moment withdraw the attention from the anxieties of life, it may shew the performer's dexterity, the skill of the composer, and the merit of the instruments, and in all or any of these ways it may afford a slight pleasure, but without engaging the affections, it can never yield that permanent, useful, and heartfelt satisfaction which legislators, civil, military and ecclesiastical have expected from it." If melody has any good effect upon the passions, and if the regulation of these

be of importance to our welfare and happiness, then music is indeed of use, of noble use.

We find, that the ingenious Greeks had arrived at a considerable degree of perfection, in distinguishing the different kinds of melodious expression, and appropriating them to useful purposes. Thus says Plato, "Music, in former times, was precisely distinguished into its several kinds. One was appropriated to the supplication and praises of the gods; these were called Hymns; another species was the lamenting or pathetic; a third was the Pœan or Song of Triumph; a fourth was the Dithyrambic; and a fifth consisted in singing ancient laws or proverbs: each had its particular



“kind of melody adapted to it.” Aristides Quintilianus, a Greek writer on music, treating of the Melopoeia, or composition of melody, says it may be divided into that which renders us melancholy, that which enlivens us and pleases the imagination, and that which is proper for quieting the perturbations of the spirit.” Athenæus assures us that anciently all their laws, divine and civil, exhortations to virtue, the knowledge of divine and human things, the lives and actions of illustrious men, and even histories, particularly Herodotus, were written in verse, and publicly sung by a chorus, to the sound of instruments. Hence the eloquent Fenelon says, “It was by music and the charms of verse that they softened savage nations, and by the

“ same harmony they sweetly instilled  
 “ wisdom into their children—to in-  
 “ spire their minds with the love of  
 “ glory, liberty and their native coun-  
 “ try; and with a contempt of death,  
 “ and riches, and effeminate pleasure.  
 “ All these arts (music, &c.) under the  
 “ shew of pleasure, favoured the most  
 “ serious designs of the ancients; and  
 “ were used to promote morality and  
 “ religion.”

As Music is thus capable of being  
 applied to noble purposes, it cannot  
 be called, with propriety, a mere  
 amusement. When Dr. Burney \* tells  
 us it is at best an amusement, he cer-  
 tainly refers only to the bulk of what is  
 composed in the present fashionable

\* In Preface to his History.

stile. For he will not, surely, apply his remark to that music, for instance, which is used for the purpose of devotion. It will, indeed, apply in full force to those Symphonies and Concertos which, to gratify a depraved taste for variety, and to display the science of the composer, and the talents of the performers, sacrifice the genuine expression of good music which affects the heart. This corrupted taste in melody, together with the mechanical complication of modern harmony, stamping the medley character on most compositions, give us too much reason to renew the old complaint of Plato, when the Grecian music was first corrupted, that "in course of time the poets themselves (we may substitute musicians) were accessory to a fatal



"change in music; they wanted not  
 "genius, but had no regard to what  
 "was just and legitimate, running into  
 "extravagance and too much indulg-  
 "ing the vein of pleasure. Hence  
 "they confounded all the several kinds  
 "(of musical compositions) together,  
 "affirming that mere taste and pleasure,  
 "whether of a good or wicked man,  
 "was the only criterion of music."

So filled is this scientific kind of me-  
 lody with rapid and difficult divisions,  
 sudden transitions, singular passages  
 very high in the scale, and affected and  
 abrupt cadences, that one who relishes  
 expressive melody is apt to think the  
 composer, while he displays his art, in-  
 tends to tantalize his auditor's feelings.  
 He presents to his view, perhaps, ma-

ny sweets, but keeps him ever on the wing, and will scarcely permit him to taste.

No sooner has the composer, perhaps, brought your mind into a mournful sympathizing state, than he requires you to be bold and daring, to hurry along and admire the surprising flights of fancy and execution. Are you expecting and desiring a cadence on the key? He must lead you an intricate dance before you arrive at it; or perhaps withholds it altogether. You are conducted into a labyrinth, where you see many pleasant arbours, in which you wish to repose, and enjoy, for some time, the delights of the place; but, no sooner are you at them, than you are hurried away to dark passages and long winding al-

leys, and, after being whirled round and fatigued, are abruptly left to find your own way out.

Rapid passages are suitable only to a very joyous and volatile state of mind. The general use of them, therefore, tends greatly to confound expression. Whatever is difficult is seldom pleasing. By readily overcoming the difficulties, the performer obtains, at best, but a silly kind of admiration; similar to what a child shows upon the gingling of his bells. Sudden transitions are commended upon the principle of the beauty of contrast, particularly exemplified in the light and shade of painting. But there is a material difference between the mixture of colours to the eye and the succession of opposite



kinds of sounds to the ear. The first is natural and pleasing. But in pathetic music the case seems to be different. It is unnatural to a sound mind, at least it is a sign of levity, to make sudden transitions from one state to another of an opposite kind, as from gentleness to boldness and agitation. If, therefore, soft and sweet notes have a relation to a gentle frame of mind, and loud and rapid to the opposite, there will be an impropriety in suddenly changing from the one to the other; as is frequently done in modern music. If it is intended to draw the mind from one state to another, it should be done in a gradual persuasive kind of manner. Religion and virtue, by degrees, lead the mind from the indulgence of the turbulent and unruly passions to the practice of

the more kind and gentle affections. Melody may advantageously imitate this order. Sometimes, when united with poetry, it may beautifully change the bold and animated expression for the tender and pathetic. As when, in Ossian's poems, the heroic soul of Fingal, after the impulse of valour, and the heat of battle, is melted into tenderness and kindness to his vanquished foe, remembering that he was the brother of Agandecca, "the first of his loves." With respect to singular passages very high in the scale, being above any ordinary pitch of voice, they are difficult to be understood, and therefore fail to be truly pleasing. These passages ought always to be of an easy and familiar kind, or an echo or repetition of such passages as are in

a more ordinary pitch; in which case, like a distant warble, they may have a good effect. By the introduction of highly flourished and often deferred cadences, the hearer is treated like a child to whom alluring things are frequently held out and drawn back. "Vocal music" (and we may add instrumental) says the Abbot Gravina (as quoted by the Abbe du Bos) "ought to imitate the natural language of the human passions rather than the singing of Canary birds, which our music affects so vastly to mimic with its quaverings and boasted cadences."

These false refinements have affected our vocal melody, as well as instrumental; the songs of Billington and Mara, as well as the symphonies composed by



Haydn and Pleyel. Even sacred music is not exempted; particularly when accompanied with instruments. Frivolous and airy passages sometimes mingle with such strains as should never deviate from that solemnity which suitable ideas of the Being to whom they are addressed ought always to inspire. Even in Hallelujahs and expressions of devout gladness, we should, in the language of Scripture, "join trembling "with our mirth." Owing to inattention in this respect, some pieces of sacred music, intended for that kind of expression, seem better calculated to promote convivial hilarity.

In answer to the remarks on this style of melody, it may be said, that it is necessary for the sake of variety,

without which music would soon cloy. *Good* simple melody of the pathetic kind, however, does not soon satiate. As we peruse and re-peruse a sublime poem, or affecting narrative, with continued satisfaction, and gaze on a beautiful picture with unwearied eye, so the mind wishes to enjoy a moving strain of melody; and is disappointed if suddenly deprived of that pleasure. Besides, if the composition is inspired by genius, melody may be wonderfully varied, without such expedients. Its elements, though few in number, like those of speech, may be combined in a vast variety of ways, without fantastical arrangements. Music, therefore, that will not attract without these, cannot be reckoned good. It resembles more

the incoherencies of a madman, than  
the persuasive and delightful eloquence  
of a moving orator.



## PART II.

### *Sketch of Harmony—its use—and mis- application.*

After all the controversies of learned  
moderns, whether the ancients had  
such an harmonic system as the present,  
it seems now to be generally believed  
that they had not. Of this the most

convincing evidence is, that in many complete Greek treatises, comprehending the whole system of their music, no notice appears of such an art as counterpoint, or the composition of parts moving in different intervals and time. Such a proof cannot be invalidated by some passages in other Greek authors, which seem to imply the contrary, but are susceptible of different interpretations.

The origin of the present system must be therefore assigned to the counterpoint of Guido Aretin, and the invention of the modifications of the notes which fix their time. In consequence of these inventions, and the knowledge of the perfect chord, consisting of such intervals as are resolved

into the key, its third, and fifth, it was found, that different melodies, or variations of one melody, might be composed and performed harmoniously together.

Such a curious novelty in music would naturally attract the attention of musicians, in a high degree; and its scientific use being found out, it has been generally adopted in Europe, as the ground-work of music, and grand display of the art.

Without doubt, it is a great acquisition to the science. It serves to analyze the construction of melody, and the "concord of sweet sounds." The practice of it is an excellent school for performers, in order to acquire justness of



tone, accuracy of time and freedom of execution. And it affords them a particular kind of social pleasure, by enabling them to perform together, and at the same time have different parts, to display their talents, and enjoy their own peculiar strains. It assists, too, in imitating such natural objects as music can represent. In this respect, however, as its representations are by no means so perfect or distinct as those of painting and poetry, it is inferior to these arts; which Mr. Harris has well explained in his Treatises. Its peculiar excellence, he justly remarks, consists in its powers of moving the passions, those springs of human conduct. The chords of harmony have also some effect in heightening the expression of the melody. Thus the Abbe du Bos

says, "The concords in which harmony  
 " consists have almost pleasing attrac-  
 " tive for the ear and the concurrence  
 " of the different parts of a musical  
 " composition which form these con-  
 " cords contributes also to the expres-  
 " sion of the sound the musician in-  
 " tends to imitate."

Upon the whole, however, harmony  
 seems, from its nature, to be chiefly  
 useful and entertaining to those who  
 are fond of studying the science, and  
 who are improving themselves in the  
 performance of music. As connected  
 with melody it is thus, what a seminary  
 of education is to real life.

With regard to pathetic expression,  
 it is highly probable that modern har-

mony, particularly the figured kind, has done much more harm than good. The parade of art, without genius, which it has introduced; and the facility with which the defects of insipid melody are hid in the maze of concordant parts, have, not a little, contributed to confound the different kinds of expression; which are thus sacrificed on the altar of modern harmony. What Dr. Burney applies to the times before the introduction of Recitative in Italy, may be used with propriety in the present. "Till this time," says he, "Musicians having been chiefly employed in gratifying the ear with the concord of sweet sounds, without respect to poetry, or aspiring at energy, passion, intellectual pleasure, &c." A taste is formed of attending more to the



art than to the general effect it has on the mind. Hence Du Bos writes, "There are a great many who, being too susceptible of the impressions of music, attend to nothing but the charms of the modulation and the richness of the harmony, and insist upon the composer's sacrificing every thing to these beauties."

Figured counterpoint seems to have a natural tendency to weaken the force of melody, by dividing the attention. In music, as in many other things, excellence and exquisite pleasure depends much upon a high degree of intense-ness with which the attention is fixed upon its object. The mind is thus almost absorbed, while composing, or highly relishing, a work of genius;

and can with difficulty be drawn away to any thing else.\* Now, there are three ways in which figured harmony may be heard. The first is, when the principal melody only is attended to; the second, when the attention is occasionally directed to all the parts; the third is, when the unity of melody, which Rousseau recommends, takes place, when all the parts are heard together, as one body of sound, or grand melody. In the first case, if we suppose a strain, which has delighted us as simple melody, formed into a piece, in the modern style, with accompaniments, we still enjoy the same pleasure, by attending to the principal part,

\* Hence the absence of mind which is frequently observed to attend men of genius; the objects of sense scarcely drawing the mind from its eager pursuits.

and the accompaniments, though little noticed, add a kind of grandeur by their effect on the ear. But this may be produced, perhaps, as well by the addition of unisons and octaves. It is indeed true that the chords of harmony may sometimes assist the expression of melody; but, if really good, and well performed, it does not seem to need assistance. Thus Dr. Burney says, "An  
" elegant and graceful melody exquisi-  
" tely sung by a fine voice, is sure to  
" engage attention, and to create de-  
" light without instrumental assistance,  
" and in a solo, composed and per-  
" formed by a great master, *the less*  
" *the accompaniment is heard the better.*  
" Hence it should seem as if the har-  
" mony of accumulated vocal parts, or  
" the tumult of instrumental, was no



“ more than a succedaneum to a melli-  
“ fluous voice or single instrument of  
“ the first class.” Now, pathos being  
always attractive, even with ordinary  
voices and instruments, seems to need  
no figured accompaniments, to assist its  
expression. In the second way of hear-  
ing the parts of harmony, in which the  
attention is divided among the several  
parts; as it is impossible for it to be  
fixed on different objects, at the same  
moment of time, it must be perpetually  
wandering from one part to another;  
while they, like rival competitors for  
fame, alternately attract its regard.  
This mode of hearing a piece of music  
will gratify those who study composi-  
tion, or those who are fond of having  
their attention in that dissipated state,  
in which it is, “ lost and confounded

"in the various shows:" but it is not suited to such as have their chief enjoyment in pathetic expression. According to the third way of hearing the harmonical parts, it may be said, that, when the composition and execution are good, and the hearer at a proper distance, the parts seem to melt into one grand body of sound. This, however, it is probable, seldom happens in figured counterpoint; and when this is the case it is merely an approximation of harmony to simple melody: and a single part might be composed, so as to have, with the assistance of unisons and octaves, a similar effect.

While melody is shown, from history and observation, to have effects on the mind superior to mere amusement, we

scarcely find any thing of the kind attributed to harmony. Indeed the highest praise bestowed upon its master-pieces is, that they are ingenious and fanciful, rich or grand, qualities better adapted for show and amusement than to produce moral effects. Some persons have, it is true, been so overpowered, by a grand chorus, as to faint, and even expire. But such effects cannot be called pleasant or good; and differ much from the medicinal influence ascribed to music by the Greeks. Probably they may be imputed to the effect, which some chords are observed to have, upon the nerves, produced and heightened to a very great degree.

In regard to the comparison between the ancient and modern music, it may



be the truth, that the moderns have deeper knowledge in the science, and that the ancients made a better use of the knowledge they possessed.

Harmony makes almost an entire separation between music and poetry; as the attention is abundantly employed in understanding and relishing the beauties of melody and sentiment together, without harmonic parts. De la Valle, mentioning the artifices of elaborate composition, says, "they are unfavourable to poetry and the knowledge of what is sung;" and again, "it is utterly impossible to discover the sentiment of the poet, and that which chiefly makes a voice superior to an instrument."

It is to be regretted, therefore, that harmony has come into such general use, as a public amusement. In this respect, as it can be understood and relished only by a few, it seems almost as improper as it would be to introduce recitations of the Greek and Latin poets in a mixed audience. With regard to pathetic expression, it would appear nearly as suitable to introduce such discussions as those in *Hermes* and the *Diversions of Purley* into the eloquence of the senate or the bar; and knowing grammar to be a groundwork of Oratory, to accompany it always with copious dissertations on the nature of particles, nouns and verbs.

"The combination of many sounds  
"and melodies," says Dr. Burney,

"moving in different intervals and dif-  
 "ferent time, would have occasioned a  
 "confusion which the respect that the  
 "Greeks had for their language and  
 "poetry would not suffer them to tol-  
 "erate." In our time, so has this re-  
 spect for language and poetry, in musi-  
 cal matters, diminished, that the expres-  
 sion which is suited to enforce them is  
 neglected; and to such a degree, that  
 Dr. Burney himself seems to be almost  
 of opinion a final separation should  
 take place. It is in consequence of this  
 neglect, however, that music has dege-  
 nerated, from being the ally of every  
 generous sentiment and noble passion,  
 to be accounted a mere amusement; the  
 pastime of an idle hour. It is thus that  
 the lyre has fallen from the hands of  
 the instructors of mankind; to be sound-



ed by those only who contribute to their recreation.

“Such harmony,” says the sweetly persuasive Fenelon, “as serves merely to please the ear, is an amusement fit only for soft and idle persons; and is unworthy of a well ordered commonwealth. It is no further valuable than the sounds agree to the sense of the words, and the words inspire virtuous sentiments.”

If any amusement can be converted into the means of mental improvement, it is laudable to attempt it. Let us therefore try to do this with music.

attention. It may be making one step  
 in point out a method by which consist-  
 ency of expression would be promoted.  
 It might be useful, in this view, to  
be upon some distinct line of study  
 in view of that particular expression  
 according to which musical pieces might  
 be composed, such as, for example,  
 in which it is the most valuable than  
 1. Both, compared, magnanimous

### PART III.

*Hints with a view to improvement,  
 drawn from the preceding parts.*

If the expression of the passions, and  
 affections of the mind, is to be consider-  
 ed as the chief excellence of music, the  
 improvement of that expression must  
 be allowed to be highly deserving of

attention. It may be making one step to point out a method by which consistency of expression would be promoted. Might it not be useful, in this view, to fix upon some distinguishing classes or divisions of that pathetic expression? according to which musical pieces might be composed: such as, for example:

1. Bold, courageous, magnanimous;
2. Merry, joyous;
3. Calm, cheerful, contented;
4. Tender, plaintive, compassionate;
5. Solemn, devotional.\*

In such pieces, it ought to be the study of the composer to find out and

\*Mr. Avison proposed to make a distinction of this kind in a grand edition of Marcello's Psalms. See proposals at the end of his Essay.



use such strains as will most forcibly excite those affections of the mind to which the class may refer; and to admit nothing, however sanctioned by custom, that has a tendency to destroy or confound the expression.

It is, indeed, true that the expression of music is of a general kind, and that the same class will include several affections. These differ, however, more as to their objects than their nature, as kindness assumes the different names of goodwill, friendship or compassion, according to the situation of its objects. It is also true, that the expression of the passions is frequently blended in music, and that, of a great many compositions, the expression is wholly uncertain. But this no more proves it to be altogether

ambiguous, and incapable of being distinguished, than the blending of colours in the rays of light prevents green, red or blue, in other cases, from being distinctly displayed to the eye. Dr. Beattie, in one part of his Essay on Poetry and Music, seems to think melody incapable, without the assistance of poetry, of fixing any particular expression on the mind; but he must only mean, that it is more general without poetry than with it: for he says, in another part of his essay, “ Nor can it  
 “ be denied that instrumental music  
 “ may both quicken our sensibility and  
 “ give a direction to it; that it may  
 “ both prepare the mind for being affected and determine it to one set of  
 “ affections rather than another; to melancholy, for instance, rather than

“merriment, composure rather than agitation, devotion rather than levity.”

Though poetry furnishes music with particular sentiments and images, it cannot be therefore inferred, that music has not an expression suited to affect the mind, though of a general kind; and that this expression may not be separated into classes, according to the affections which it is calculated to produce.

In consequence of this separation, gradual improvement, in every kind, might be expected. Excellence and progressive advances, in any art, depend much upon successive efforts of genius in the same direction; which is promoted by the division, into various branches, that gradually takes place in



the progress of arts both liberal and mechanical. Accordingly, improvement, by degrees, might be expected, in expressive melody. Composers would be led to study chiefly that kind in which their genius excelled. A few indeed, like Shakespear, may be equally successful in exciting the sad or mirthful emotions; but in general it will be found, that they can express with most lively feeling some particular kind. In this respect much may depend upon the natural disposition and habits. He who is of a lively cheerful temper may succeed best in the notes of joy; and he who is of a sedate and thoughtful turn in the solemn and plaintive strains.

By means of this order, melody would become more simple, and the

inundation of difficult, rapid and trifling passages be kept within proper bounds. It may be objected, that by simplifying instrumental music, we would prevent fine instruments, such as the violin, from displaying their peculiar powers, of easily executing rapid passages and striking distant intervals. But, as these have been shown to be of no great use in pathetic melody, there would be little occasion for regret. They might be still used by performers, as exercises for attaining freedom of execution.

Those expressive pieces of music might be also composed in such measures as would suit the different kinds of verse used in English poetry; and thus the union of musical pathos with poetic imagery and sentiment would be

facilitated. In course of time, collections of such pieces could be made; classing them according to their character. And the expressive strains and passages in old compositions might be collected and formed into similar pieces.

Thus, music of the best composers could be easily adapted to any piece of poetry. For hymns we would find melodies in the solemn class, of a simple kind, yet uncontaminated with the association of mean or licentious ideas; for heroic poems, in the bold and animated class; for elegies, in the plaintive; and for didactic poems and songs, melodies of the tender or cheerful kind, according to their genius.

By these means, both poetry and



music would become better fitted to promote the rational and improving amusement of social life. And music in particular would rise in dignity; and be cultivated by many who think the study of it requires too much time for a mere amusement.

These expressive compositions would not only be useful and entertaining in public and social life, but in the quiet hours of retirement. During these, one might find in the cheerful or bold kinds of melody a spring to the flagging spirits, or if opprest with care or grief, in the plaintive class a relief similar to what is derived from sympathy.\*

\* Thus a gentleman, whom the author knows, mentioned that, when the sorrowful remembrance of his deceased lady opprest his mind, he found relief in the plaintive notes of "Mary's Dream," which they had often sung together.

And, as the art would become more honourable and useful, so would the professors. Their reputation would become more solid and extensive; their works be more generally practised; and, together with their names, be handed down with honour to posterity.

Surprise has been expressed, that an art, which is allowed to be capable of calming the passions, should appear to have no effect on the temper of its professors. But, when it is considered that music is reduced to the state of simple amusement, which has no such effect on the passions; and that the expression which is suited to produce tranquillity is confounded and lost in the labyrinths of modern harmony, that surprise may cease.

At present the works of favourite composers may be the fashion of the time; but they are so full of extravagant modulations, so inconsistent and trifling in expression, and so weighed down by a mass of elaborate harmony, that, except perhaps a few happy and simple strains, they soon sink into oblivion.

If the remarks in the preceding parts are just, harmony ought to be confined to the use of professors and musical scholars. In places of public entertainment and social circles, it should be superseded by expressive melody; or if harmony is introduced, it ought to be simple counterpoint, and the principal melody so strengthened with unisons



and octaves that there may be no risk of the attention being distracted.

The esteem in which the Scottish and other simple and pathetic melodies are held, is a proof that the taste of the age is not wholly depraved. This may encourage some great musician to try to establish order in the chaos of expression. We might then hope, in time, to see the musical world assume a regular and beautiful appearance.

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## APPENDIX.

### CONTAINING ACCOUNT OF AN INVENTION BY THE AUTHOR.

It occurred to the Author that, by adding, to the present strings of the violin, doubles tuned an octave below, and by placing the old and new strings so close as to be acted on together by the fingers and bow, the tone of the instrument would be enriched; and an effect be produced similar to bass and treble voices singing together the same air. He foresaw, however, that, if

the new strings were to be of the same kind with the old, there would be such a necessary disparity in size between the strings to be sounded together, as would be very inconvenient in fingering and bowing. But observing that there is no great difference between the size of a common bass string and the tenor, which are a note more than an octave separate, he concluded that the best plan would be to make all the new strings of the same kind with the present bass—the octaves of the treble, tenor and counter to be near the size of these strings, and the octave of the bass to be as much larger as might be necessary. He saw, too, that it would be proper to enlarge the bridge and nut a little, and to make the upper edge of the bridge more convex, to prevent confusion among the strings. To make room for pins for the new strings, he found it would, in general, be necessary to have an entirely new pin-box. But, for the sake of experiment, he caused holes, sufficient to admit small pins, be made between the old ones, in a common violin, and, as there would not be room for the fingers to turn the new pins, they were made with square heads to be turned with a harpsichord key. Having, in this manner, made a trial of the invention, he found it attended with the following inconveniencies. The strings at first made a disagree-



able jarring. But this was found to be occasioned by the octaves being too near each other, so as to be prevented from vibrating freely. Upon being removed a little farther distant, this disagreeable effect, in a great measure ceased. What remained, the author imputed to some of the strings not being properly proportioned or not of a good quality, as others were perfectly freed from the jarring. By a little practice, in proportioning the strings and their distances, this difficulty could easily be surmounted. An inconvenience of a more serious kind was the trouble of keeping the strings in tune. In the way in which the trial was made, the author found this trouble very great. A considerable part of it, however, was occasioned by some of the pins being turned by the fingers and others by the key. As there are double the ordinary number of strings, there will always, indeed, be additional trouble in tuning. But, when the pins are all turned in the common way, this can, by no means, be intolerable; especially as the octave is, next to the unison, the musical relation easiest to be ascertained by the ear. The author, therefore, sees no insuperable difficulty in the way of carrying this invention to perfection.

As to its being an invention of his, he can only say

that he never read or heard any hint of it. The artist whom he employed, who is in the practice of improving violins, and has had occasional intercourse with some of the most famous musicians of the time, told him *after* he had communicated his ideas to him, that he had fitted some violins with double strings *unifone* but never before heard of such a plan with *octaves*.

With regard to the use and merits of the invention, it may be best to leave them to be determined by experience.

Should this kind of instrument ever come into use, it might be called with propriety the **OCTAVE VIOLIN**.

